

Message Text

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SCCT-01 IO-10 AID-05 /085 W

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R 011025Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 348

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 5868

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, ELAB, TS

SUBJECT: STATE SECURITY COURT TRIES MORE SUBVERSIVES

REF: TUNIS A-17

1.SUMMARY: GOT STATE SECURITY COURT HAS BEGUN NEW TRIAL OF DISSIDENTS ACCUSED OF RANGE OF SUBVERSIVE CRIMES. KEY ACCUSATIONS RELATED TO ATTEMPTED FORMATION OF RADICAL LABOR ORGANIZATION. WHILE TRIAL HAS NOT CAUSED MAJOR STIR IN TUNISIAN CIRCLES, IT HAS PROMPTED UNFAVORABLE PUBLICITY FOR TUNISIA IN FRENCH PRESS. THIS PUBLICITY HAS IN TURN PROMPTED GOT TO REVEAL THAT SUBVERSIVES BEING TRIED HAD PLANNED ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND THAT THEY HAD BEEN TRAINED IN THE USE OF WEAPONS IN LEBANON BY GEORGE HABBASH'S POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE. GOT CONTROLLED PRESS HAS ALSO CRITICIZED FRENCH TEACHERS SUPPLIED TO TUNISIA UNDER JOINT COOPERATION PROGRAMS FOR SUBVERTING TUNISIAN YOUTH. TRIAL IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE FOR ANOTHER WEEK AND PROBABLY WILL RESULT IN LONG JAIL TERMS FOR MOST OF THE ACCUSED. END SUMMARY.

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2. ON SEPTEMBER 23, GOT STATE SECURITY COURT BEGAN TRIAL

OF 101 PERSONS ACCUSED OF VARIOUS CRIMES OF POLITICAL SUBVERSION. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNT OF TRIAL, 64 OF THE ACCUSED (11 ON PROVISIONAL LIBERTY) WERE ACTUALLY PRESENT FOR TRIAL WHILE REST HAD FLED. INDICTMENT OF ACCUSED INCLUDED CRIMES OF PLOTTING AGAINST STATE SECURITY, MAINTENANCE OF AN ASSOCIATION THAT HAD NOT BEEN LEGALLY RECOGNIZED, SPREADING FALSE NEWS, INSULTING THE PRESIDENT AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT, AND FORGERY. THE PRESS SAID THAT AFTER "DELIBERATIONS AND AT THE REQUEST OF THE LAWYERS," THE COURT ADJOURNED UNTIL SEPTEMBER 26. FURTHER SESSIONS WERE HELD ON THE 26TH, 27TH, 29TH AND 30TH.

3. THE ACCUSED IN THIS TRIAL HAD BEEN APPREHENDED BY GOT SECURITY FORCES AT VARIOUS TIMES; HOWEVER, MOST OF THEM WERE INVOLVED IN A SUBVERSIVE GROUP THAT PUBLISHED A DISSIDENT NEWSPAPER IN PARIS CALLED "L'OUVRIER TUNISIEN" AND HAD ATTEMPTED TO ESTABLISH RADICAL WORKER ORGANIZATIONS INDEPENDENT OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE GOT'S RECOGNIZED TRADE UNION MOVEMENT (UGTT). THE ACCUSED REPORTEDLY INTENDED TO USE THESE RADICAL LABOR GROUPS TO FOMENT SOCIAL DISCONTENT FOR RADICAL POLITICAL GOALS. MOST OF THE ACCUSED ARE YOUTHFUL STUDENTS (AT LEAST SEVEN FROM SECONDARY SCHOOLS), BUT SOME ARE WORKERS. SOME WOMEN ALSO INCLUDED. THE SIZE OF THE GROUP INDICATES THAT THE GOT UNCOVERED A SUBSTANTIAL ORGANIZATION, AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT TUNISIAN SECURITY FORCES WERE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED AT THE THREAT POSED BY THE GROUP TO INTERNAL SECURITY.

4. THE GOT HAS BEEN LIKEWISE UPSET BY CONDUCT OF TRIAL ITSELF. THE SEPTEMBER 23 SESSION HAD TO BE ADJOURNED BECAUSE OF PROTESTS BY DEFENSE LAWYERS AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN COURT BY THE ACCUSED AND THEIR FRIENDS WHO ATTENDED THE OPEN SESSION. THE DEFENSE LAWYERS OBJECTED BECAUSE ALL OF THE ACCUSED WERE NOT GRANTED PROVISIONAL LIBERTY AND COMPLAINED THAT THERE HAD NOT BEEN SUFFICIENT TIME TO PREPARE AN ADEQUATE DEFENSE. THE LAWYERS WITHDREW FROM THE CASE IN PROTEST AND RETURNED ONLY AFTER THE INTERVENTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE BAR ASSOCIATION. THE ACCUSED AND THEIR FRIENDS CHANGED SLOGANS AND SANG REVOLUTIONARY SONGS,
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PROMPTING THE GOT TO CONSIDER CLOSING THE TRIAL TO THE PUBLIC.

5. IN CONNECTION WITH THIS TRIAL, "LE MONDE" PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 26 A SIGNED ARTICLE BY JEAN-PIERRE DARMON IN HIS CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT OF FRENCH AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. DARMON CRITICIZED GOT FOR CONDUCTING TRIAL IN VIOLATION OF UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS

OF MAN AND TUNISIAN CONSTITUTION ITSELF. HE ALSO ASSERTED THAT ACCUSED WRE ON TRIAL ONLY FOR "CRIME" OF HOLDING "HETERODOX OPINIONS" AND WANTING TO EXPRESS THEM. HE CLAIMED THAT THEY HAD NOT PLANNED ANY ACT OF VIOLENCE. DARMON REITERATED ACCUSATIONS OF TORTURE BY GOT SECURITY FORCES AND CALLED ON AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS TO PROTEST TRIAL TO TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES.

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6. GOT RSPONDED TO DARMON ARTICLE BY CLOCKING CIRCULATION IN TUNISIA OF "LE MONDE" ISSUE CARRYING IT AND PUBLISHING RIPOSTE IN TUNIS PRESS. THIS RIPOSTE CLAIMED THAT ACCUSED HAD PLANNED VIOLENCE (SPECIFICALLY, KIDNAPPING TUNISIAN DIPLOMATS TO SECURE RELEASE OF IMPRISONED COMRADES, ASSASSINATIONS AND BOMBINGS) AND CITED USE BY ONE OF THEM OF A WEAPON TO RESIST ARREST. GOT ALSO DISCLOSED THAT 15 OF THE ACCUSED HAD BEEN TRAINED IN USE OF LIGHT AND "SEMI-HEAVY" ARMS BY GEORGE HABBASH'S POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE IN LEBANON. THESE ARMS INCLUDED SOVIET MACHINE GUNS AND "TWO OTHER ARMS CALLED B-7 AND B-2, WHICH RESEMBLE THE AMREICAN ROCKET." GOT RIPOSTE ALSO NOTED THAT DARMON, A FORMER PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TUNIS, HAD BEEN CONDEMNED TO FIVE YEARS IN PRISON BY TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES IN 1968 FOR

PLOTTING AGAINST THE SECURITY OF THE STATE. (THIS TRIAL OF DARMON OCCURRED AFTER HE LEFT TUNISIA AND HE HAS REPORTEDLY NEVER BEEN IMPRISONED HERE.) THE GOT CLAIMED THAT DARMON HAD SOUGHT ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO RETURN TO TUNISIA BUT THAT THE GOT HAD REFUSED HIS REQUESTS BECAUSE OF HIS ROLE IN FOMENTING TROUBLE AND CONTINUED ACTIVITY IN THE "COMMAND OF THE ORGANIZATION" IN PARIS. THE RIPOSTE
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ALSO SAID THAT "FRENCH TEACHERS, WHO COME TO TUNISIA FOR THE PURPOSE OF CULTURAL COOPERATION, INCULCATE YOUTH WITH SUBVERSIVE IDEAS." FOLLOWING DAY'S PRESS PRINTED "CORRECTION" OF THIS STATEMENT, SAYING THAT IT SHOULD HAVE READ "SOME FRENCH TEACHERS."

7 COMMENT: THIS TRIAL HAS NOT ATTRACTED WIDE ATTENTION SO FAR NOR HAS IT BECOME A "CAUSE CELEBRE." TUNSIAN OBSERVERS, WHO REMAIN MILDLY SYMPATHETIC TO DISSIDENT YOUTH, VIEW IT AS PART OF GOT'S CONTINUING POLICY OF CONTAINING ANTI-GOVERNMENT POLITICAL ACTIVITY. GOT SECURITY FORCES, HOWEVER, HAVE TAKEN THE THREAT POSED BY THE SUBVRSIVE GROUP SERIOUSLY AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE ACCUSED ARE LIKELY TO RECEIVE LONG PRISON SENTENCES. DISCLOSURE OF THE GROUP'S VIOLENT INTENTIONS, AS WELL AS THE PFLP'S ROLE IN PROVIDING WEAPONS TRAINING, IS PROBABLY DESIGNED TO WARN TUNISIAN PUBLIC OF DANGER AS WELL AS ANSWER CRITICISM OF EUROPEAN LEFTISTS. LIKEWISE, ATTACK ON FENCH TEACHERS SURVACES LONG-STANDING GOT RESENTMENT OF ROLE THEY PLAY IN RADICALIZING TUNISIAN YOUTH.
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